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Effective promotion of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the independent expert on minority issues, Gay McDougall, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 63/174.

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Report of the independent expert on minority issues

Summary

The present report is submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to its resolution 63/174 of 18 December 2008. It is the first report submitted by the independent expert on minority issues, Gay McDougall. Pursuant to resolution 63/174, the independent expert outlines her activities to promote implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The independent expert provides a brief overview of the activities carried out under her mandate since its establishment in July 2005, including country visits and thematic work undertaken.

The report focuses on the role of the protection of minority rights in conflict prevention. Among the essential elements of a strategy to prevent conflicts involving minorities are respect for minority rights, particularly with regard to equality in access to economic and social opportunities; effective participation of minorities in decision-making; dialogue between minorities and majorities within societies; and the constructive development of practices and institutional arrangements to accommodate diversity within society. Significantly, the independent expert emphasizes that attention to minority rights at an early stage — before grievances lead to tensions and violence — would make an invaluable contribution to the culture of prevention within the United Nations, save countless lives and promote stability and development. Among the recommendations included in the report is the suggestion that expertise in minority rights should be strengthened and integrated comprehensively across the United Nations system.

Contents

Chapter		*Page*
I.	Introduction	3
	A. The link between minority rights violations and violent conflict	6
	B. Early warning indicators	8
II.	Protection of minority rights: a national tool for avoiding violent conflicts	9
	A. Effective participation in political life and decision-making	10
	B. Protection of cultural identity	12
	C. Non-discrimination and equality	13
III.	A minority rights perspective at the international level: a tool for conflict prevention	15
	A. United Nations institutional framework	15
	B. Regional organizations	19
IV.	Conclusions and recommendations	20

I. Introduction

1. The present report[1] is submitted to the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly in accordance with resolution 63/174 of 18 December 2008. This is the first report of the independent expert on minority issues. The mandate of the independent expert was created by the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 2005/79 of 21 April 2005 and renewed by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 7/6 of 26 March 2008.

2. Bearing in mind those resolutions, the Human Rights Council has requested the independent expert on minority issues, inter alia, (a) to promote the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities,[2] including through consultations with Governments, taking into account existing international standards and national legislation concerning minorities; (b) to identify best practices and possibilities for technical cooperation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at the request of Governments; (c) to apply a gender perspective in his/her work; (d) to cooperate closely, while avoiding duplication, with existing relevant United Nations bodies, mandates, mechanisms and regional organizations; and (e) to take into account the views of non-governmental organizations on matters pertaining to the mandate of the independent expert.

3. The independent expert's evaluation of minority issues globally is based on the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and on other relevant international standards. She has identified four broad areas of concern relating to minorities globally, as follows: (a) the protection of a minority's survival, through the combating of violence against the members of that minority and the prevention of genocide; (b) the protection and promotion of the cultural identity of minority groups and the right of national, ethnic, religious or linguistic groups to enjoy their collective identity and reject forced assimilation; (c) the guarantee of the rights to non-discrimination and equality, including ending structural or systemic discrimination, as well as the promotion of affirmative action when required; and (d) the guarantee of the right to effective participation of members of minorities in public life, especially with regard to decisions that affect them. The independent expert has applied a gender perspective to all areas of her work and has given a high priority to the situations of minority women.

4. Since July 2005, during the course of her tenure as the first holder of the mandate, the independent expert has undertaken numerous activities of a thematic nature as well in direct engagement with specific States and on distinct minority situations. To date, she has conducted official country visits to 10 countries, including the following: Canada, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Guyana, Hungary, Kazakhstan and Viet Nam. On the basis of information provided to the independent expert from a variety of sources, she sends communications to States seeking information on specific situations affecting minority communities and members of minority groups.

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[1] The independent expert on minorities expresses her appreciation to Chris Chapman for his contribution to this report.

[2] General Assembly resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992, annex.

5. The thematic reports include analysis of global minority issues and provide recommendations to States and others. In 2006, the independent expert presented a thematic study to the Human Rights Council, which focused attention on minorities in the context of poverty alleviation and poverty reduction strategies and the Millennium Development Goals. In 2007, she undertook thematic research and held a seminar on the global issue of minorities and discriminatory denial or deprivation of citizenship, and in 2008 presented a thematic report and recommendations on this issue to the Human Rights Council.

6. By resolution 6/15 of 28 September 2007, the Human Rights Council created the Forum on Minority Issues. Since 2008 the Forum has provided an important platform for minorities and the discussion of minority issues. The independent expert is required to guide the sessions of the Forum, prepare its annual meetings and make recommendations to the Human Rights Council for thematic subjects to be considered by the Forum. In December 2008, the inaugural Forum on Minority Issues considered minorities and the right to education (A/HRC/10/11/Add.1). In November 2009 the second annual session of the Forum considered minorities and effective political participation (A/HRC/13/25). The third annual session of the Forum will take place on 14 and 15 December 2010 and will be dedicated to the issue of minorities and effective participation in economic life. The Forum seeks to provide concrete and tangible outcomes in the form of thematic recommendations of practical value to all stakeholders. The independent expert reports to the Human Rights Council on the recommendations emerging from the Forum.

7. In accordance with the mandate of the General Assembly to promote stability, security and peaceful relations between States, the theme of the present report is the role of minority rights protection in conflict prevention. Among the essential elements of a strategy to prevent conflicts involving minorities are respect for minority rights; dialogue between minorities and majorities within societies; and the constructive development of practices and institutional arrangements to accommodate diversity within society.

8. The present report will focus on how attention to minority rights violations at an early stage — before they lead to tensions and violence — would make an invaluable contribution to the culture of prevention within the United Nations, save countless lives and promote stability and development.

9. The history of the development of minority rights at the United Nations has been closely linked to the need to address tensions between minorities and the State, and between population groups. The Declaration, which establishes the mandate of the independent expert, states in its preamble that the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities contribute to the political and social stability of States in which they live. The drafting of the Declaration began in 1978, and received added impetus with the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Those events led to concerns that tensions between the many ethnic and religious communities in those entities would erupt and result in long-running wars. They also inspired efforts to develop standards and mechanisms on minority rights in the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

10. By resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The importance attached to it was summed up by the

representative of Austria, who, speaking before the Third Committee, observed that once the declaration had been adopted, it should then not be filed and forgotten, but implemented and filled with life, so as to contribute to overcoming situations of tension relating to minorities (see A/C.3/47/SR.47, para. 89).

11. It is the view of the independent expert that much bloodshed and suffering and many setbacks in the process of national development could be avoided if Governments took a proactive approach to minority rights, putting protections in place long before tensions erupted. Societies in which mechanisms are in place allowing minorities freely to use their language, practice their culture and religion, and participate in political and economic life on an equal footing with the rest of the population are less likely to be societies in which tensions deteriorate into violent conflict.

12. Equally, in those States that implement protection for minority rights, minorities are more likely to be recognized as equal rights-holders and afforded the full protection of the State from aggression and violence directed against them.

13. Minorities are often the targets, rather than the perpetrators, of violence. When minority rights are violated, members of minorities may be at a greater risk of being subjected to systematic violence, even when they are bystanders to a conflict involving other parties. Such incidents can happen as a result of minorities' poverty and exclusion from political decision-making processes, or because their often remote communities, poorly served by State infrastructure, can become targets for occupation for strategic purposes or for exploitation of natural resources. Furthermore, owing to the suspicion and prejudice with which they are often viewed by both members of the majority and security forces, minorities may be targeted with impunity.

14. Additionally, women and men members of minorities may be targeted by armed actors in different ways, increasing the forms of violence in the society in general. For example, women are targeted by sexual violence, while men are forcibly recruited into militias. The rape of women, for example, may be intended to humiliate men and demonstrate their inability to protect "their" women.

15. The views of the independent expert have been developed over the course of her work, including through visits to countries in almost every region of the world, thematic reports and policy debates that she has facilitated at the Forum on Minority Issues. She has consulted widely with Governments, experts and non-governmental organizations. She has participated in seminars and forums in the field of early warning and conflict prevention. In addition, she has held consultations with numerous key actors, including the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, including discussions relating to, inter alia, how efforts could be coordinated to identify potential threats to the existence of minorities and how to better coordinate conflict prevention work.

16. For the purposes of the present report, the independent expert has consulted a number of key staff members of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, including think tanks and academic institutions, and has conducted a review of relevant literature.

A. The link between minority rights violations and violent conflict

17. The protection of minority rights and the prevention of violent conflicts are legitimate goals of independent value to be pursued by the international community. Both goals lie at the heart of the mandate of the United Nations, and States should pursue each one as a valid objective in its own right. However, the fact that these two concerns are so often linked to one another makes it appropriate to consider them together.

18. Since the Declaration was adopted in 1992, the basic assumption contained in its preamble — that the implementation of minority rights contributes to the stability of States — has been taken up and developed further in successive resolutions of the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights, its successor the Human Rights Council, reports of the Secretary-General and outcome documents of a number of conferences and policy processes.

19. In his landmark report to the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations in 2000, the Secretary-General stated that in many countries at war, the condition of poverty was coupled with sharp ethnic or religious cleavages, and that almost invariably, the rights of subordinate groups were insufficiently respected, the institutions of Government were insufficiently inclusive and the allocation of society's resources favoured the dominant faction over others. He added that the solution was clear: to promote human rights, to protect minority rights and to institute political arrangements in which all groups were represented, and that every group needed to become convinced that the State belonged to all people (A/54/2000, paras. 202-203).

20. In the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (A/CONF.189/12 and Corr.1, chap. I), the outcome document of the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, the participating States expressed their concern that socio-economic development was being hampered by widespread internal conflicts which were due, among other causes, to gross violations of human rights, including those arising from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and from lack of democratic, inclusive and participatory governance. It urged States to recognize that techniques, mechanisms, policies and programmes for reconciling conflicts based on factors related to race, colour, descent, language, religion, or national or ethnic origin and for developing harmonious multiracial and multicultural societies needed to be systematically considered and developed (ibid., paras. 21 and 171).

21. The Secretary-General has stated that respecting the rights of children, of women, and of all minorities is at the core of the Charter of the United Nations; it is both a moral obligation and an economic imperative. Discrimination and injustice threaten the goals for peace, security and sustainable development. Preserving minority languages and nurturing ethnic cultures and traditions lays the foundations for lasting stability.[3]

22. With respect to the donor community, it has been recognized that engagements between donors and recipient countries — whether from a conflict prevention or post-conflict peacebuilding perspective — need to be guided by recognition of the specific injustices suffered by minorities. The Organization for Economic Cooperation

[3] See press release SG/SM/12833, 7 April 2010.

and Development, which brings together the world's main donor Governments, has developed a set of principles guiding assistance to fragile States, in which it urges member States to promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies. Real or perceived discrimination is associated with fragility and conflict, and can lead to service delivery failures. Measures to promote the voice and participation of women, youth, minorities and other excluded groups should be included in State-building and service delivery strategies from the outset.[4]

23. The link between minority rights and conflict prevention and conflict resolution has also been made by regional intergovernmental organizations. In the African context, in 1994, States members of the Organization of African Unity reaffirmed their deep conviction that friendly relations among their peoples as well as peace, justice, stability and democracy, called for the protection of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of all their people including national minorities and the creation of conditions conducive to the promotion of that identity.[5]

24. In the Americas, the Inter-American Democratic Charter stresses that the elimination of discrimination and respect for cultural diversity contribute to strengthening democracy and citizen participation,[6] which in turn are necessary for ensuring peace, stability and development. In the Copenhagen Document of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the participating States reaffirmed that respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities as part of universally recognized human rights was an essential factor for peace, justice, stability and democracy in the participating States.[7]

25. Research conducted by academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations provides further support for this basic premise. The Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity at Oxford University has undertaken detailed quantitative and qualitative research into conflict and horizontal inequalities (inequalities between ethnic, religious or linguistic communities) in 8 countries in three regions, and statistical desk research in 55 countries. The Centre analyses inequalities in access to economic opportunities, participation in political decision-making and the status accorded to cultural practices and symbols. The Centre concluded that in the top 5 per cent of countries with the greatest socio-economic inequalities, the risk of conflict is tripled when compared with the average. The risk of conflict increases again if socio-economic inequalities are combined with inequality in access to political decision-making, and inequality in cultural status adds a further risk factor. Despite its findings, the Centre has

[4] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Principles for good international engagement in fragile States" (Paris, 2007), available from http://www.oecd.org/document/48/0,3343,en_2649_33693550_35233262_1_1_1_1,00.html.

[5] Organization of African Unity, Declaration on a Code of Conduct for Inter-African Relations, Assembly of Heads of State and Government, Thirtieth Ordinary Session, Tunis, 13-15 June 1994 (AHG/Decl.2 (XXX)).

[6] Organization of American States, Inter-American Democratic Charter, art. 9 (Lima, 11 September 2001).

[7] Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE" (1990).

encountered very few examples of policy at the international level to address these types of inequalities, although policies at the national level are more common.[8]

26. The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, a three-year research project involving 16 eminent scholars in the field of conflict prevention and resolution, concluded that time and again in the twentieth century, attempts at suppression of ethnic, cultural or religious differences had led to bloodshed, and in case after case, the accommodation of diversity within appropriate constitutional forms had helped to prevent bloodshed.[9]

27. The Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has conducted research showing that the likelihood of conflict increases with rising group inequality.[10] The Minorities at Risk Project at the University of Maryland monitors indicators for political discrimination, cultural and economic exclusion and persecution on 283 minority groups around the world, and has found a significant link between conflict and those forms of denial of rights.

B. Early warning indicators

28. Since minority rights are at the root of a significant number of internal conflicts, incorporating minority rights indicators into early warning systems would enable an earlier identification of potential conflicts.[11] Minority rights violations are often among the root causes of conflicts that have long gestation periods, root causes grounded in grievances that may bubble under the surface for years, or even decades, before violent conflict breaks out. Other more technical early warning indicators, such as small arms flows and movements of displaced peoples, tend to reflect a situation that is already rapidly spiralling into violence. By the time those indicators trigger attention, grievances may have festered for decades, perhaps generations — generations of lost opportunities to heal rifts, avert conflict and build a cohesive society.

29. Some analysts worry about the risk of raising false alarms by flagging concerns at too early a stage. But if the response to an early warning of patterns of discrimination is to work with the Government to set up programmes that correct those patterns, then that has its own value, regardless of the impact on conflict prevention.

30. Clearly it is necessary to combine monitoring of patterns of economic and political exclusion, for example, with an analysis of the political and social context, allowing for an identification of the risk of escalation that is as accurate as possible. Better insight is needed into why certain situations of systematic exclusion escalate

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[8] F. Stewart, G. K. Brown and A. Langer, "Major findings and conclusions on the relationship between horizontal inequalities and conflict", in *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multi-ethnic Societies*, Frances Stewart, ed. (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[9] David A. Hamburg and Cyrus R. Vance, *Preventing Deadly Conflict* (New York, Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1997), p. 29.

[10] United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2004: Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World*, pp. 41-42.

[11] S. Srinavasan, *Minority Rights, Early Warning and Conflict Prevention: Lessons from Darfur* (London, Minority Rights Group International, 2006).

from chronic grievances to violent conflict. It may be due to numerous factors, such as the building up of pressure over time to intolerable levels; regime change (many studies have found a link between political transitions and increased incidence of conflict); the emergence of a leader committed to mobilizing the community; or a specific, highly symbolic trigger, perhaps linked to an affront to a community's identity such as the denial of status to a minority language.[12]

31. For the above-mentioned reasons, it has been argued that early warning systems need to combine the collection of disaggregated quantitative data with more in-depth qualitative analysis.[13] Such a course of action would enable the identification of complex interactions between political, social and economic factors that help decide whether violent conflict will break out, and if so, when.

II. Protection of minority rights: a national tool for avoiding violent conflicts

32. Conflict prevention is not the sole positive outcome of respect for minority rights. Societies flourish when all voices are heard, when all opinions are considered; when all citizens participate; and when the talent that exists in all communities is enabled to contribute to political institutions. Inclusion is good for societies as a whole, not just for those previously left out. Consequently, creating the conditions for the effective participation of minorities should be considered by States as an integral aspect of good governance and a key priority in their efforts to ensure equality and non-discrimination.

33. States are at times, however, diverted from acting consistently with this inclusive approach to national self-interest. Minorities are too often seen as a threat to the State and/or national unity. Governments may hold the erroneous views that national unity is fragile or that new States can be achieved only through the denial or disregard of distinctive aspects of the identity of minorities; that demands by minorities for an equal voice in policymaking will dissipate central authority; that respect for minority languages produces cleavages between ethnic groups or translates into prohibitive government expenditures; or that culturally defined production methods have no place in a modern economy.

34. In such situations Governments may become nervous when ethnic, religious or linguistic groups attempt to assert their identity. There may be an assumption that what those groups want is to separate themselves from the State. However, many conflicts involving minorities start as peaceful demands to be included in the society on the basis of equal treatment.[14]

35. Many States are engaged in ongoing efforts to accommodate the interests of diverse communities. Finding the optimal arrangement may be a dynamic process

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[12] Denial of status to minority language has been linked to the onset of conflict in both the Atlantic Coast region of Nicaragua in the 1980s and in Sri Lanka in the 1950s. See S. Brunnegger, *From Conflict to Autonomy in Nicaragua: Lessons Learnt* (London, Minority Rights Group International, 2007).

[13] J. A. Goldstone, "Using quantitative and qualitative models to forecast instability", Special Report No. 204 (Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace, 2008).

[14] See *Negotiating Justice? Human Rights and Peace Agreements* (Geneva, International Council on Human Rights Policy, 2006), chap. VII.

and may not be resolved at the first attempt. Some States have repeatedly adjusted the structure of their systems of federalism over many years in an effort to defuse conflict over power and resources. What is important is to ensure that the State provides channels to raise issues and to participate in decision-making; that it constantly reassesses the success of efforts to accommodate diversity; and that it is aware of the different options available.

36. It is critical that the process be guided by the principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination. Communities that may be more populous, that have greater disruptive capacities or military strength or that may be more successful in commerce may emerge at an early stage as the principle contenders for distribution of political power and State resources. However, under such conditions, minority rights must be prioritized, enabling members of all minority groups to participate effectively in decisions affecting them and in all aspects of society.

37. Equally, efforts must be made to give voice to the diversity of members within minority communities, including women, youth and the elderly, and to interest groups such as returning internally displaced persons. The participation of civil society in debates over models for inclusion is essential.

38. National human rights institutions that comply with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights ("the Paris Principles")[15] can also play a constructive role in promoting the positive valuing of diversity and addressing issues that could cause conflict. Such institutions may include designated commissioners for minority issues, or separate, dedicated institutions may be established, as is the case with the National Commission for Minorities in India.

A. Effective participation in political life and decision-making

39. The effective and meaningful participation of minorities in the political arena can be a pivotal element in avoiding violent conflict. While members of minorities have the right to participate in decision-making processes, particularly those that affect them, as established in article 2 (3) of the Declaration, the reality is often quite different. Minorities are greatly underrepresented in the political processes and governing institutions of most countries for a variety of reasons. They may be intentionally restricted from participation or inadvertently disadvantaged by laws or policies, or there may be a lack of political will to dismantle structural barriers to the full and equal participation of minorities.

40. In its commentary on the Declaration, the Working Group on Minorities stated that the right to participate in all aspects of the life of the larger national society was essential, both in order for persons belonging to minorities to promote their interests and values and to create an integrated but pluralist society based on tolerance and dialogue (see E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2005/2, para. 35). The Working Group also emphasized that effective participation required representation in legislative, administrative and advisory bodies, and more generally in public life (ibid., para. 44).

[15] General Assembly resolution 48/134, annex.

41. States have significant leeway to decide, in consultation with minority communities, the modalities by which political participation can be achieved. Those measures may include the devolution of certain powers by means of a federal or autonomy arrangement; an informal council of minority representatives or a statutory body, which is consulted by the executive on matters of concern to the minority; electoral systems based on proportional representation; a system of reserved seats for minorities in parliament; or the facilitated participation in the electoral process of political parties representing the interests of minorities.

42. Modalities for inclusion should always ensure ample representation of minorities at all levels of the civil service, including the police and the judiciary (see A/HRC/13/23). Additionally, it is important to note that the Declaration does not endorse modalities that would violate the sovereignty or the territorial integrity of States. Most importantly, the modality for political inclusion must afford minorities genuine influence. Tokenism or State interference in the process of identifying political representatives, for example, may lead to deeper frustrations. Further, full respect for freedoms of expression and assembly is critical.

43. The most appropriate system will depend on the specificities of the situation, including how populous the communities are, whether they are geographically dispersed or concentrated, the aspirations of the minority groups and how well integrated they are into the broader society. The flexibility of the minority rights framework makes it well suited to the compromises necessary in processes of negotiating solutions, diffusing tensions and avoiding violent conflicts.

44. In November 2009, the second session of the Forum on Minority Issues focused on the issue of minorities and effective political participation. Representatives of minority communities, staff of the relevant funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations and experts on minority rights participated actively in the session. The Forum produced a set of practical recommendations and affirmed that ensuring meaningful and informed participation and the management by minorities of matters directly affecting them was a means to promote stability and integration in the societies where minorities live (A/HRC/13/25, para. 5). The Forum also recommended that States should consider what special arrangements were needed to ensure that minorities could participate in political processes during situations of transition or conflict (ibid., para. 24).

45. Peace agreements at the end of internal armed conflicts often include some kind of power-sharing institutional arrangement. However, modalities for including minorities in political structures could usefully be identified at earlier stages to avoid conflict. Respecting the right of minorities to political participation at times of peace contributes to harmonious societies and opens non-violent avenues for the grievances of minorities to be addressed.

46. When violent conflict does occur in diverse societies, applying a minority rights-based approach to consultations regarding peace agreements will require that all communities affected by the conflict, including those that are not active parties to it, be able to participate in the settlement process. That approach should counteract a tendency common in many conflict situations, whereby Governments, and to a certain extent the international community, focus predominately on addressing the demands of communities that are linked to armed movements, which may result in peace agreements that guarantee rights for some communities at the

expense of others. That outcome both rewards the use of violence and violates the rights of those not associated with armed movements.

47. A prime example is the constitutional arrangement derived from the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Annexes thereto (Dayton Peace Agreement) (A/50/790). According to the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, membership in the House of Peoples and the Presidency are reserved solely to those who identify as belonging to one of the "constituent peoples". That provision has been found by the European Court of Human Rights to violate international legal protections against discrimination on racial or ethnic grounds, and specifically the rights of persons belonging to ethnic groups other than the Bosniacs, Serbs or Croats.[16] Sustainable peace is highly dependent on the participation of all population groups in peace negotiations and resulting State institutional arrangements.

B. Protection of cultural identity

48. At the core of minority rights are the protection and preservation of culturally distinctive identities within societies. The denigration or suppression of the defining identity of a person or group can be a powerful factor in generating conflict. Repressive measures to control or restrict religious or traditional practices or force assimilation can galvanize opposition and bridge other divides that may exist within the targeted communities, thereby creating a common platform around which they can rally. Language, in particular, is a potent vehicle of culture. The imposition on minority communities of a majority language, either through teaching in public schools or formal prohibitions on the use of minority languages, has been a spark that has ignited many violent clashes in every region of the world.

49. The Declaration, in articles 4 (2) and 4 (3), establishes positive obligations requiring that States take measures to create favourable conditions to enable persons belonging to minorities to express their characteristics and develop their culture, language, religion, traditions and customs, except where specific practices are in violation of national law and contrary to international standards. It also requires that States take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or have instruction in their mother tongue. In terms of good practice, the Constitution of South Africa provides a good example of how recognition of the diversity of identities in the country, and in particular language rights, has contributed to cohesion and a relatively peaceful transition to democracy.[17]

50. Central to the identity of communities are their historical narratives. Inclusion in the national narrative was a central demand of members of minorities in every country the independent expert visited. Inclusion, in that respect, can be achieved through recognition in national policy statements, history textbooks for schools, museums that celebrate the varied cultures of a country and the contributions of all groups to the national identity, and national days of celebration, to name only a few

[16] See *Sejdić and Finci vs. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Judgment of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights, 22 December 2009 (Nos. 27996/06 and 34836/06).

[17] The affirmation of diversity is in the Preamble; recognition of 11 official languages is in article 6, including provisions to set up mechanisms to promote those languages. Available from http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/1996.

models. Nevertheless, the histories and contributions of minorities are rarely adequately reflected, which contributes to a sense of alienation and exclusion for members of some minorities.

51. To denigrate a community's identity as inferior or stereotype it as violent, criminal or "foreign" is discriminatory, a violation of rights and may constitute incitement to racial or religious hatred. It impacts negatively on community members' sense of inclusion in the national identity and encourages prejudicial attitudes and even violent attacks on the community by members of the public. The slope is steep and slippery between statements of disrespect coming from national leaders and hate crimes committed by individuals who feel they have been given licence.

52. Some conflicts are rooted in the denial or deprivation of citizenship to certain identity groups. Disputes regarding citizenship often arise against the background of pre-existing ethnic or regional conflict, linked in many cases to broader factors of poverty, competition for scarce resources and political instability (A/HRC/7/23, para. 26). The denial of citizenship to a minority community has both a symbolic and practical impact, both of which can be central to the origins of conflict. It sends an unambiguous message about the exclusion of a community as part of the national identity. The denial of citizenship can also mean denial of access to schooling, to health treatment or other services and to political office as well as the constant threat of deportation.

C. Non-discrimination and equality

53. The reality — and often the perception — of discrimination in access to any kind of resources, whether in relation to jobs, land ownership, political power or natural resources, is a strong driver of conflict. The Declaration states, in article 4 (1), that "States shall take measures where required to ensure that persons belonging to minorities may exercise fully and effectively all their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law".

54. Economic exclusion is a cause, a manifestation and a consequence of discrimination against persons belonging to minorities. Many minorities have historically been excluded from full and effective participation in economic life, both in the developed and in the developing world. Minorities are often discriminated against when they seek employment, for example, on the basis of their colour, their religion, their language, their names, or even their addresses. Minorities are often poorly represented even in public sector employment and despite legislation that bans discrimination in both public and private sectors. They may face barriers in accessing credit or loans to begin small businesses and may live in the poorest regions or remote areas that offer limited prospects for their economic development. Equally, large-scale economic development projects or commercial activities carried out on the lands and territories where minorities live without their prior consultation has had negative impacts, including displacement, the perpetuation of poverty and, in some cases, violence.

55. Several factors and challenges can exacerbate this exclusion of minorities, including deteriorating economic conditions, ethnic tensions and rising discrimination. In some countries, unequal regional distribution of resources and services as well as lack of basic infrastructure in regions where minorities live often

have the effect of excluding them from fully exercising their economic and social rights. The past decade has also brought into the picture new and unanticipated challenges, including the global food and economic crises that have been proven to have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups and minorities.

56. Consequently, the rights of minorities to participate effectively in economic life must be fully taken into account by Governments seeking to promote equality at every level. From implementing non-discrimination in employment to enforcing corporate responsibility principles and developing national economic development and international development assistance schemes, Governments face the constant challenge of ensuring that the rights of minorities are protected and that they benefit as equal stakeholders in society. In their response to the current global crisis, development agencies, financial institutions and other actors involved in international cooperation are also faced with the challenge of ensuring that measures taken to alleviate the effects of the crises do not negatively impact minority rights.

57. Equal access for all communities to employment in public services can become a highly contentious issue, especially in countries where such jobs form a large proportion of the available labour market. In countries where political power is seen to be concentrated in the hands of one or a few identity groups, it is common for those groups to be disproportionately represented in the public service, which can be a powerful source of tension.

58. The adequate representation of minorities at all levels and in all branches of the criminal justice system can have particularly important implications for relations between disadvantaged communities and the Government. Negative encounters with police or security forces at the local level shape minority perceptions of their treatment and acceptance by the State. There may be a lack of understanding of issues facing a minority community or of sensitivities relevant to policing, especially in situations in which minorities experience wider societal discrimination. The policing of minority areas by exclusively majority police forces may inflame tensions and, under certain conditions, lead to the outbreak of violence.

59. Economic exclusion and denial of access to quality education bring about a sense of despair and destroy hopes of upward mobility. As such they are often a central grievance and a source of tensions. International standards on non-discrimination, including the Declaration, place an obligation on States to institute affirmative action policies to correct historical patterns of exclusion and enable members of minorities to achieve equality. Many States have recognized the corrosive nature of inequalities and have implemented such measures. Affirmative action programmes can, however, be a point of contention for majority communities, in particular when poorer members of majority communities perceive that they are losing out. It is important that Governments exercise leadership in educating the larger public, demonstrating that such programmes are based on the principles of justice and equal opportunity and result in fairer and more stable society.

60. Poor education and economic opportunities commonly affect women members of disadvantaged minorities disproportionately. Women may face a scarcity of employment opportunities and discriminatory hiring practices based on prejudice against their minority group. Women generally share a disproportionate burden of caregiving, especially when poverty denies any possible respite or help. The heavy burden imposed on individuals and entire communities by the lack of options often

fuels a disturbing culture of domestic violence. Levels of economic exclusion can be compounded by discrimination in access to other rights, for example civil and political rights, leaving women very limited access to the criminal justice system for their domestic violence cases.

61. A frequent source of conflict worldwide is discrimination and inequality in relation to land and property. For minority communities, often located in remote rural areas, the land and territories on which they live are a source of food security and income generation as well as being vital to the preservation of minority cultures, traditions and collective identity. However, some minorities find that their rights to own, occupy and use land are limited or violated and they may find themselves displaced or evicted, in some cases to make way for national economic development schemes, the activities of multinational corporations or for natural resources development. Land and property issues should consequently be given close attention in respect of conflict prevention.

62. Further issues of importance regarding patterns of discrimination are presented by international development cooperation. In some countries, programmes to promote development implemented by Governments and external donors fail to take into account the inequalities between communities, the unique circumstances of minorities or the possible need for special measures to ensure that minority communities also benefit from such initiatives. Further, minorities may be adversely affected, for example through displacement by large-scale projects such as dams and natural resource extraction, or as a result of the negative environmental impact of such projects. As noted in the report of the independent expert on minorities, poverty and the Millennium Development Goals, conflict prevention is one reason why monitoring poverty alleviation among persons belonging to minorities is crucial: if strategies are successful for some groups but not for minorities, inequalities will increase and so too may tension. Inclusive participation strategies for poverty reduction are proven and effective conflict prevention measures (see A/HRC/4/9, para. 43).

III. A minority rights perspective at the international level: a tool for conflict prevention

63. According to a statistical assessment carried out by Minority Rights Group International, over 55 per cent of violent conflicts of a significant intensity between 2007 and 2009 had at their core violations of minority rights or tensions between communities. In a further 22 per cent of conflicts, minority issues had emerged or receded in the course of the evolution of the conflict. Those figures indicate that Governments, donors and intergovernmental organizations need to allocate significant attention and resources to minority issues as sources of conflict. However, the current picture in this regard is mixed.

A. United Nations institutional framework

64. The tragic events in Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia gave new impetus to efforts by the United Nations to protect minorities — described by the Secretary-

General as "genocide's most frequent targets"[18] — and other vulnerable population groups. In 2004, the Secretary-General established the mandate of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. The principal objective of the Special Adviser is to advise the Secretary-General and the Security Council on actions to protect vulnerable populations from genocide. The Office of the Special Adviser also attempts to identify a range of potential threats to minority populations at an early stage and make recommendations regarding the more constructive management of cultural diversity issues.[19]

65. An analysis framework is used by the Special Adviser's office to identify threats to minority communities at an early stage. In addition to genocide-specific indicators, such as the demonization of minority communities and a history of genocide in the country, it includes indicators of broader significance to minorities, such as conflicts over land, power, security and expressions of group identity, such as language, religion and culture, and attacks on cultural and religious property and symbols.[20]

66. As an essential tool of the early warning aspects of the mandate, the Special Adviser's office is privy to an enormous flow of information generated by sources inside and external to the United Nations system. The Special Adviser's gauge for sifting through that information flow is calibrated for precursors to genocide: an extremely important focus but one that is limited, fortunately, to a small number of situations. Clearly, therefore, there is a need for additional tools that focus on chronic abuses of minority rights at the earliest stages, to identify situations needing more upstream preventive action.

67. By its resolution 60/1 of 16 September 2005, the General Assembly adopted the 2005 World Summit Outcome, in which the States Members of the United Nations conceptualized a principle that is of prime importance to the protection of minorities: the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, more commonly known as "the responsibility to protect". This concept recognizes the duty of the international community to intervene to protect populations when their own Governments cannot or lack the will to do so. It prioritizes above all the use of appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, before legitimate force is contemplated through Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

68. As with the mandate of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, the focus of the institutional mechanisms that are being developed to implement the concept of the responsibility to protect will be limited to specific crimes.[21] A broader focus on minority rights protections as a tool for protection from conflict will need to be the task of other mechanisms.

69. A number of offices and agencies within the United Nations system have information assessment, early warning and conflict prevention functions. The Department of Political Affairs is the lead agency for conflict prevention and peacemaking. Within the Department, the standby team of mediation experts, an

[18] SG/SM/9245, 7 April 2004.

[19] Interview with member of the staff of the Special Adviser's office, 10 May 2010.

[20] See http://www.un.org/preventgenocide/adviser/.

[21] See the report of the Secretary-General on early warning, assessment and the responsibility to protect (A/64/864).

innovative unit established in March 2008, plays an important role. The team is on call to provide expertise on specific issues to United Nations initiatives to mediate in situations of conflict or potential conflict. This team has provided support and advice to peacemaking and dialogue efforts in several situations involving minorities, including Darfur, Iraq, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan and the Philippines. The Department has a focal point on indigenous peoples, but not one on minorities. The standby team currently includes an expert on power-sharing, but does not include a professional with more comprehensive expertise on minority rights. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also has an Early Warning and Contingency Planning Section.

70. The Inter-Agency Framework for Coordination on Preventative Action (Framework team) is an informal forum for inter-agency exchange of information and collaboration involving 21 different United Nations entities (A/64/864, paras. 7-13). The Framework team is a mechanism that shares information on potential crises and works together to support the development of inter-agency conflict prevention initiatives. As such it is a key part of the United Nations conflict prevention architecture. The Framework team is designed to support the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations country team in countries that show early signs that a situation, whether at the regional, national or subnational level, is likely to lead to violence. The programme initiatives are designed to address the issues at the early upstream stage in the conflict cycle, so that the situation does not escalate into overt conflict.

71. Good practice exists at the policy level and in field operations, as illustrated by examples provided by the specialized agencies of the United Nations. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) operates an early warning system in some of its in-country programmes, often using sophisticated computer mapping, which is designed to map specific local conditions, such as movements of security forces and displaced peoples, presence of weapons, availability of basic services and access to water sources. In some situations a process of broad consultations with local communities is incorporated. UNDP has developed a capacity to identify the root causes of conflicts, notably through deployment of peace and development advisers to country teams who help in conducting conflict analyses. Experience has shown that context-specific systems that mix qualitative and quantitative indicators and political analysis are effective, if highly resource intensive.

72. The Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, a conflict prevention bureau within UNDP, currently has no focal point on minorities either; however, UNDP has recently enhanced its understanding of minority issues in development processes through a series of workshops resulting in a resource guide and toolkit for UNDP field staff, which includes guidance on addressing conflict situations.

73. In Guyana, a project carried out jointly by the Department of Political Affairs and UNDP seeks to build national capacities for the promotion of reconciliation between ethnic groups, including through the creation of committees to enable community representatives to work out their issues themselves. In Indonesia, the Bureau spent two years working with Christian and Muslim communities, providing space for reconciliation and consensus-building. Issues such as access to civil service jobs and perceptions of respect for ethnic and religious identity were addressed. Significant improvements were achieved in the level of understanding between the communities and in the level of security.

74. The mandate of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) does not explicitly encompass conflict prevention; however, UNICEF both generates and monitors country-specific data that reveal situations of emerging conflict. Its activities focusing on the most marginalized and vulnerable women and children position it uniquely to play the kind of early prevention role with respect to minority rights that is contemplated by this report. Given that minority children are often the most disadvantaged, there is a sound basis for the engagement of UNICEF in minority issues. With a wide network of offices worldwide, UNICEF is in an important position to encourage the introduction of minority issues on Government public policy agendas, to support Government efforts and directly deliver assistance to minority children and women. The UNICEF field presence is common in conflict zones, and its focus on protection issues makes it an institution with key relevance to conflict prevention. At UNICEF headquarters, there is a cluster of professionals whose portfolios include minority rights issues.

75. Discussions about pooling the outputs of the early warning systems of the various funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations and the possible development of a common system have not made significant progress owing to the complexities of the systems and the different needs of each body. An achievable aim could be to pool best practices to be made available to United Nations Headquarters and in-country teams, particularly with regard to innovative new practice using computer technology to compile and process large quantities of context-specific data.

76. The independent expert on minority issues, under the mandate established by the Commission on Human Rights in 2005, has the potential to make a positive contribution to the prevention or peaceful resolution of tensions involving minorities, including by addressing issues of long standing and structural discrimination at the earliest opportunity. In the reports of the independent expert on her missions, she has repeatedly made recommendations to address such situations, based on the concerns voiced by both minority representatives and Government officials.

77. The Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and the treaty monitoring bodies are well placed to identify the warning signs of impending conflicts, including those affecting minorities. In October 2009, a United Nations round table on Special Procedures entitled "Early Warning and Emerging Issues"[22] was held in New York. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief emphasized the contribution that these mechanisms can make to a better understanding of complex situations, for example involving systemic exclusion and discrimination of certain minority groups. Other participants recommended strengthening the capacity of the Special Procedures to contribute to early warning, by ensuring that their recommendations were communicated more effectively to the United Nations field presences, by improving on follow-up to communications to States and by ensuring that data revealing patterns of severe abuses were communicated as early warnings.

78. Historically, channels of communication between the human rights institutions in Geneva and the peace and security bodies in New York have not been optimal. A number of significant improvements have taken place, notably the enhancement of

[22] Available from http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/special/docs/BPRoundTable.doc.

the status of a New York presence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, now headed by an Assistant Secretary-General, and regular briefings to the Security Council by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

79. Reflecting on the experience of regional intergovermental organizations, including OSCE, the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, established in 2003 to consider how the United Nations should address newly arising security, environmental and developmental challenges, recommended that the United Nations build on the experience of regional organizations in developing frameworks for minority rights (A/59/565, para. 94).

B. Regional organizations

80. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has established a specific mechanism to address conflicts involving minorities, the High Commissioner on National Minorities.[23] The mandate is informed by the minority rights provisions contained in the Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (29 June 1990).[24] The High Commissioner acts as an early warning and early action mechanism, primarily through the use of preventive diplomacy. The High Commissioner can visit countries where tensions have arisen between a minority and the State and engage with representatives of both sides. The High Commissioner uses a problem-solving approach to break down the externally voiced positions into an analysis of needs, interests and aspirations, and propose constructive solutions based on a broad knowledge of approaches worldwide.

81. The High Commissioner has developed a number of guidelines to help national and international actors to address issues that have a potential to cause conflict, including education, language rights, political participation and the involvement of "kin States" (States whose majority community is ethnically related to a minority in a neighbouring State).

82. Preventive diplomacy can be most effective when tensions first arise between a Government and a minority, and they are relatively susceptible to third party engagement. Envoys may work discreetly, as the situation is not yet in the glare of national or international media. Parties may be willing to calmly present their concerns, and to explore possible solutions. When a situation develops from these initial tensions to actual incidences of violence, positions begin to harden and resistance to compromise grows. It becomes more difficult for leaders to make compromises as the depth of feeling and emotion among their constituencies increases.

83. As an illustrative example, in the late 1990s the High Commissioner monitored the situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and became very concerned about grievances of the ethnic Albanian population, particularly with respect to access to Albanian-language university-level education and other language rights, as well as the right to run their own media outlets and political participation. He issued an early warning within OSCE and also took a project-

[23] Available from http://www.osce.org/hcnm/13022.html.

[24] http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2006/06/19392_en.pdf.

oriented approach to easing tensions around the contentious language issue. The High Commissioner persuaded the Government to adopt a new language law permitting private universities to offer instruction in languages other than Macedonian. He then raised the funds to establish a new university that would offer instruction in Albanian.

84. Another interesting example of good practice is the fact-finding mission organized by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to Cameroon, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to look into the situation of the migratory pastoralist Mbororo community. The Mbororo have been spreading in migrating waves across the countries in question over thousands of years. The mission was triggered by the increasing occurrence of conflict between the Mbororo and local settled agriculturalist communities with whom they entered into contact.[25]

85. The Peace and Security Council mission recommended a meeting of regional Governments, representatives of the Mbororo and local affected communities, to develop a strategy that would help reduce tension in the most sensitive areas, to consider the delimitation of livestock corridors to be used by pastoralists and to discuss national projects to improve Mbororo integration in the national health and education systems, taking into account their lifestyle (mobile schools and health structures).[26] As ever, the challenge remains the implementation of such recommendations, particularly in countries where resources are at a premium. There is a need for continued, sustained dialogue between Governments and communities concerned and an emphasis on follow-up on the recommendations of such fact-finding missions, ideally with the support of international humanitarian agencies.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

86. Substantial steps have been taken over recent years to reposition international engagement with conflict situations from the point of reaction to a point of identification of early warnings. There is mounting evidence that one of the earliest indicators of potential violence is the chronic disregard of minority rights. Early warning systems must have the necessary expertise to be alert to such indicators. While there is already a substantial flow of information to early warning mechanisms within the United Nations system, a focus on minority rights should be strengthened.

87. Additionally, while there has been added emphasis placed on the prevention of certain specific crimes, including genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, violent conflicts that do not fit those definitions may also warrant additional attention.

88. As the Secretary-General affirmed in his report, early warning does not equate with early action (A/64/864, para. 19). States and international organizations remain reluctant to take action until violence has started. That is regrettable. Too much of

[25] African Union, "Report on the migrations of Mbororo nomadic pastoralists by the fact-finding mission dispatched to the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and Cameroon, pursuant to decision PSC/PR/Comm(XCVII) of the 97th meeting of the Peace and Security Council, held on 25 October 2007".

[26] Ibid.

the engagement of the international community is too late on the conflict continuum that spans from grievances to violence. As conflict situations escalate, the human costs on the ground and the political and financial costs to the international community escalate exponentially.

89. One of the possible benefits of placing more emphasis on minority rights as a tool for conflict prevention may be that it not only facilitates earlier warnings of troubled societies, but also that the corresponding corrective measures are relatively less costly politically. That would increase the likelihood of action being taken earlier.

90. As the former President of the General Assembly, Jan Eliasson, proclaimed, "What a qualitative difference we could have in the United Nations if we moved the focus from the late stages of conflict to the early stages, if we were to spend more time on smoke detection rather than taking care of a house that has already burned down" (A/60/PV.98, p. 4).

91. An early focus on the protection of minority rights at the national and international levels prior to the point when grievances harden into violence would make a substantial contribution towards their protection. In that regard, it may be instructive to evaluate and learn from the relatively successful experience of mainstreaming awareness of the issues of indigenous peoples across the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations.

92. In its work in the field the United Nations has developed some excellent practice with regard to minority issues. However, there is no mechanism for or consistent practice of ensuring that minority issues are mainstreamed across the in-country work of entities in the United Nations system, in accordance with article 9 of the Declaration, even in countries where those issues are at the core of local conflicts. At the Headquarters level, in the Department of Political Affairs and in the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, know-how on minority rights could be enhanced to facilitate the development of policies and practices sensitive to minorities. Appropriate training programmes and resources are required for staff throughout the United Nations system, to assist in the early identification by decision makers at the highest level of tensions involving minorities.

Recommendations for the national level

93. **To fulfil their human rights obligations and also as a measure to increase stability and improve inclusive governance, States should implement fully the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, through a process of consultation and cooperation with minority groups.**

94. **States should implement comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, including measures to prohibit discrimination by both State and private actors. Legislation must provide for effective, transparent enforcement mechanisms which can be accessed easily by all.**

95. **States should monitor the participation of minorities in all areas of economic life, including allocation of jobs within public services, to ensure that members of all communities have equal access without discrimination.**

Requirements, including language qualifications for public service jobs, should not result in the effective exclusion of minorities.

96. **States should monitor economic development projects to assess their impact on minorities, to ensure that they benefit equally with others, and that there is no detrimental effect on their rights.**

97. **Where there are historical patterns of exclusion of members of minorities from employment, business and education opportunities, States should implement capacity-building programmes and other affirmative action measures to enable members of minorities, including minority women, to compete on an equal footing.**

98. **States should collect disaggregated data concerning the access of all sectors of society to economic opportunities and political decision-making. Data should be disaggregated by ethnicity and gender to highlight patterns of inequality that have an impact on minority women in different ways than on minority men. Data collection programmes should be designed with the involvement of representatives of minority communities, should allow for diverse forms of self-identification and should provide effective guarantees of data protection.**

99. **Public proclamations regarding national identity, for example in the constitution, and key national symbols should be fully inclusive, and should not exclude segments of a country's population nor deny, explicitly or implicitly, the full diversity of the population.**

100. **Education curricula should avoid stereotypes and provide a realistic and non-discriminatory image of all communities within society. States should ensure that members of minorities are able to adopt the necessary measures to ensure the protection and promotion of their identity, such as providing mother tongue education and religious education. Education at all levels should have the goal of enabling members of minorities to compete on an equal footing for jobs and other opportunities while preserving their distinct identities.**

101. **States should involve members of all minority groups in conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives.**

102. **National human rights institutions should have mandates that explicitly include the protection and promotion of minority rights and expertise in the field of minority rights. Consideration should be given to establishing dedicated consultative and advisory bodies to help ensure that minority issues are adequately addressed at the national and local levels.**

Recommendations for the international level

103. **Minority rights expertise should be strengthened and integrated comprehensively across the United Nations system. Given the prevalence of conflicts involving identity issues, permanent in-house expertise on minority issues within the principal agencies and departments working on conflict prevention would be highly beneficial.**

104. **United Nations staff working on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, particularly those working on policy, analysis and early warning and in country**

teams, should receive comprehensive minority rights training. The United Nations System Staff College, within the framework of the newly established Conflict Prevention Analysis for Action Network, should consider developing modules focused on minorities to improve the understanding of those issues among staff.

105. **Consideration should be given to adding an expert on minority rights to the standby team of mediation experts in the Department of Political Affairs. Additional consideration could be given to involving the team in country situations at an earlier point on the conflict continuum that runs between the expression of grievances to the outbreak of violence.**

106. **The United Nations should develop an inter-agency guidance note on addressing minority issues to include, inter alia: how to consult with minority communities in order to capture the diversity of positions; how to involve civil society organizations working with minority communities in United Nations conflict prevention work; and how to develop context-specific early warning indicators.**

107. **United Nations country teams should analyse the extent to which discrimination on ethnic, religious and linguistic grounds creates disparities in outcomes relating to their programming. Country teams should promote and support the collection of disaggregated data on minorities. All existing programmes should be assessed and revised based on that analysis. Minority communities should participate fully at all stages of programming from research and design to monitoring and evaluation.**

108. **Effective steps should be taken to ensure that the national staff composition of the United Nations country teams is inclusive of persons from minority communities.**

109. **The United Nations should continue to make efforts to share the experiences of a variety of agencies with early warning methodologies, including those systems which combine quantitative and qualitative indicators, and should incorporate minority rights indicators so that all agencies, departments and country offices can draw on the best available practice.**

110. **Communications between the human rights institutions in Geneva and the peace and security institutions in New York should be strengthened further. Regular communications at a working level between the country desk officers of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and their colleagues in the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would promote the sharing of information and common understanding of minority rights situations in countries.**